2: Gourou--183 N-5 (1939 ?) 1945 Laotians
101, 361

[HD: The Laotian] population is composed of varied elements, in which the Laotians, who are a T'ai people, and Kha--the name given by the Laotians to the Indonesian populations--predominate. (1) It is dispersed in hamlets, each mustering a few

1. L'Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine (Hanoi, Ideo, 1937) gives 665,000 T'ai and 247,000 Indonesians.

dwellings and a few dozen inhabitants.

10: d'Orleans--258 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 131, 342, 361, 485

"Although the region called Laos has not, properly speaking, any clearly defined frontiers, we may consider that we have crossed the eastern boundary between Dien Bien and Sop Nao. Here the country changes, and we appear to enter a more civilised world; the houses are still based upon piles, but they are better built than those of the Thaïs, and they are arranged in regular lines on each side of a street; at the entrance an empty hostelry is ready for travellers."

10: d'Orleans--264 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 231, 342, 361

"We find some villages in the afternoon, and I get out at one of them--Sop Kin. It contains about twenty huts--small houses built upon piles like those of the Thai's, but more elegant, and half hidden amongst clumps of flowering trees, orange groves, palms, cocoanut palms and bananas. The mulberry tree is also cultivated for the purpose of rearing silkworms."

10: d'Orleans--265 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 342, 361

"...We arrive at Muong Ngoï, a rather important centre. The situation is delightful. The houses are built twenty yards above the river; they are made of woven and white-washed bamboos, which produce the effect of walls. They contain two stories, and are built with very sloping roofs; the staircases with balustrades, balconies, and verandahs, are arranged outside. They might be taken for Swiss chalets, with something lighter, more original, and less conventional about them. But the placard in European letters, 'Royal Siamese Post-office,' throws a discordant note into the scene."

10: d'Orleans--271 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 361, 417, 789

"We stop for lunch at the village of Ban Sop Huan, on the right bank of the river; the houses form a street, like the one at Sop Nao; as usual two posts stand at the entrance of it; each has a piece of carved wood on the top, which, from a distance, resembles a duck or a chicken, some white scarves also are hanging from them; they are intended to drive away the evil spirits."

10: d'Orleans--283 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 361, 501

"We still meet with fishing-rafts; but here the terraces support round huts with a rectangular opening in front; the bamboos are arranged above them to meet the current with a corner only, so that they should not catch the detritus, which would otherwise accumulate. From a distance, the effect of these buildings is rather like an enlarged beaver village, and we can imagine that the lacustral dwellings, of which so many remains are found in European lakes, must have resembled them closely.

We pass rafts laden with rice, in the middle two straw mats are connected by a roof; there is a little terrace in front and another at the back. The whole is fifteen yards long, and the Kas boatmen slowly row them down the stream."

10: d'Orleans--289 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 133, 361, 501

[LSS: near Luang Prabang] "The river is 300 or 400 yards wide; the banks are steep but low, the villages are numerous and always surrounded by small woods, while sea gulls wheel and cry over our heads. Our boats travel slowly; the men have fastened the two pirogues side by side, and like our boys they are busy washing and dressing before they enter the city. At four o'clock we pass the Laotian Custom House on our left, and, thanks to our flag, we are not stopped."

10: d'Orleans--289 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 361

"Here is Luang Prabang: at the first glance from the boat we can see nothing, or at least very little that indicates a city. For some hundreds of yards there are Laotian buildings on the left bank of the river, but their roofs are scarcely seen through vistas amongst the palm trees, cocoa trees, and bamboos, but the verdure gradually diminishes as the houses become more crowded and are arranged in more compact lines. We realise that it is an important city, an earthen mound dominates the whole, surmounted by one of those gilded domes, which recall the cupolas of the Russian churches. In the confusion of yellowish dwellings the pagodas are recognised by their superior height and by their roofs which are covered with brown tiles, laid one above the other and raised in Chinese cornices at the extremities, the palace has almost the air of an European building."

10: d'Orleans--339-340 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 361, 532, 778

"Part of the town is very sparsely inhabited, a few ruins on the track indicating the site [340] of the ancient ramparts, while turning back in the direction of the river, we have on our left the grounds of several houses belonging to mandarins, and on the right, at the foot of the hill, a group of pagodas well worth a visit.

The most important of these is Ouate Uisoune, so named after the king who built it. Dating, as the Siamese Colonel tells us, from the fourteenth century, it is in a very decrepit state, but there is much in it worth seeing; notably the gates which are of carved wood and gilt. To the right in Pra Noriei, the fourarmed goddess, borne up by Kroute, the god of the birds, and in the centre are two women, one of whom is being carried by five elephants, while to the left a god standing erect upon a buffalo is supposed to represent the chief of the coolies who weed the courtyards of the pagodas. In the interior are a number of wooden columns covered with gilded designs and others of masonry, together with pictures representing the history of Pra Uetsandaha and of Guadama. Upon the altar is a large gilt statue called Pratiao Ong Luong (great god)."

10: d'Orleans--369-370 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 342, 361, 563, 712

"We reach Paklay. The river here is broad with sand-banks on either side and water just covering the top of the rocks. The village is situated on the right bank. The piles which support the houses are hid by a net-work of bamboo, arranged also to shut in the animals. A fairly clean hut is set apart for us, as we are to stay here for a day. The Siamese lieutenant has ordered our elephants, but we cannot have them before to-morrow, so I employ a part of the day in taking photographs. The town, if so it may be [370] called, is not large, having 780 inhabitants, including women and children. The Siamese garrison is made up of eighty men, and is shifted every three years. The lieutenant lives in one half of a rather large house, and the other half is occupied by Chinese merchants."

23: Franck--269 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 342, 352, 361 Ethnic subgroup

"Though I only suspected it then, I was destined to know Nam-lien [EJ: a 'Black Miao' village in Laos.] better than I know my own birthplace, nay, than Paris or Rio de Janeiro. It consisted of a dozen thatched huts with earth floor and wattled walls on either side of the wide space that served as road, one of them the sala or rest-house for French travelers. Two bare-woven bamboo cots and a rough wooden table comprised the furnishings of this, unless one also counted the soft layer of dust on the earth floor as a rug. A few things such as eggs were purchasable about the village--though I should have been in hard luck indeed if I had not taken official advice and brought a few canned supplies with me--and a native was available to boil water and do the simplest form of cooking."

23: Franck--276-277 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 231, 242, 361

"Small villages appeared once more, this time of the real Laosians, villages of thatched houses raised on poles [277] well above snakes and possible floods, with a bit of cultivation about them. Each house had rounded gable walls at either end, one a kind of family veranda all but covered with a curving roof of thatch, where visitors are received and the family does its gossiping, the other a granary and store-room, where the cooking also seemed to be done. The walls of the houses, everything possible, in fact, were made of strips of narrow palm-leaves folded over a stick, forming panels overlapped like shingles. Many small but stout horses dotted the landscape here and there."

23: Franck--288-289 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 291, 361, 576

"Every few [289] hours a cluster of jungle houses stood out in a tiny half-clearing on the high bank of the river, and most of these we visited. At each village the chief and the other men of importance, usually including several yellow-robed priests, came to pay their respects. Instead of snatching off hats or head-cloths, and performing an antic between a courtesy and an exaggerated bow, the form of salute in Luang Prabang is to come to a complete squat. Obsequious as this looked, it was evidently merely a gesture of politeness, for even the men of highest rank who had any intercourse with the prince, representative of the king in person, dropped to their haunches, and rose to human stature again only when the interview ended. In making any request of him, or in receiving anything from him, even the boatmen squatted, holding both hands, palms together, above the head. The village notables wore sampots of many colors--purple, pink, grass-green--topped by khaki coats of uniform cut, which they evidently donned in our honor. Always they brought us leaf-wrapped cones of flowers, usually on banana-leaf platters. A supply of these bouquets of greeting, one concluded, must be kept on hand for emergencies."

23: Franck--292[2] T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 231, 361

"The villages were as much alike, once one had seen a few of them, as our own stereotyped cities: from half a dozen to a score of woven-bamboo-and-leaf shacks, light as big baskets, raised on posts, in a little clearing overrun with children, curs, pigs, and chickens--four forms of life all but universal the world over--and little else except the surrounding jungle. Chickens of both sexes, perhaps I should have specified, for in this one matter the people seemed to believe in monogamy and to have as many roosters as hens."

23; Franck--296-297 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 361

"Luang Prabang, venerable capital of the ancient kingdom of the same name, is a spacious town of a few wide French streets, softly paved, if at all, with narrow Laosian streets like lovers' lanes between them. It is well wooded, with roomy yards usually whispering with palm-trees. In other words it is not a city at all, in the crowded noisy, Western sense, but a leisurely congregation of separate dwellings of simple lines, each in its ample garden-park, or at least with sufficient ground so that its opinions or doings need not interfere with its neighbors. In short Luang Prabang town is in many ways what idealists picture the cities of Utopia to be, whatever insurance companies may think of the fire-risks involved in more thatch than tile roofs. It sits on a bank of the upper Mekong, more exactly the Me Nam Khong, that snaky dividing-line between Siam and at least half of Indo-China, which in time becomes one of the most important rivers of the Far East. Just here it happens that it is not the dividing-line, for a large chunk of Luang Prabang kingdom lies on the Siamese side of the river. Tiresome persons of statistical temperament tell us that the capital stands 340 meters, about 1135 feet, above sea-level; but one would hardly know it from the number of overcoats required. In fact, though it was still April, my host the commissaire knew the futility of expecting a guest from the temperate zone to sleep until [297] he had been cooled off with a jaunt by Ford through the tepid after-dinner night."

23: Franck--299-300 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 346, 361, 778

"Luang Prabang means Kingdom of the Divine Buddha. What more natural then than that there should be many Buddhist temples, shrines, and monasteries in its capital? Indeed there are so many on both sides of the river that the town might easily be mistaken for a holy city, devoted to priests and pilgrims. Some of the temple compounds are bare ground scattered with yellow-roofed buildings of Siamese or Burmese character, with big stupas made of mud bricks and more or less overgrown with vegetation, with mere cells raised on piles, in which languid bonzes meditate. Others are covered with groves of trees, shaded by masses of palm and banana leaves; but in them all great calm and quiet reigns. Just behind the main and market street fronting the royal palace is a rocky ridge called Pagoda Hill, two hundred feet above the plain and half encircled by the Nam-khan by which travelers unworthy of Fords come to [300] the capital from the east or south. It is worth climbing if only for the view it offers of the idyllic city and its surrounding semi-jungle; and along it ramble queer old religious structures, including one built over a gigantic 'footprint of Buddha' in the native rock."

23: Franck--302-303 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 175, 361

"A traveler who visited Luang Prabang in 1872 found it the most compactly built city of Siam, with the single exception of Bangkok, which it in some respects resembled. But of several disasters the greatest seems to have been in 1887, when the Black Flags of Taiping days in China burned and almost completely destroyed and depopulated it, so that perhaps it is not by [303] choice of its up-and-coming citizens that it is so roomy, pastoral, and ideal a city to-day."

23: Franck--333 [2] T-2 (1924) 1926
116, 361

Laotians
Ethnic subgroup

"The little clusters of very simple huts of the Kha were not near even this rarely traveled trail, but in places half inaccessible--and for many people wholly so--beyond valleys or great gullies across which they can look and see in miniature the very thin trickle of traffic and consider themselves in the world but not of it."

23: Franck--341-342 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 342, 361, 515, 779

"The uncrowded, simple, but commodious houses of these Laosian villages are always set well apart and high above the ground, back among palm-trees, banana-plants, and the like. They do not have to crowd together and save all the arable land for rice to feed too numerous mouths, for here a gentle Buddhism takes place of an ancestor-worship so [342] ardent that offspring must be had at any effort and cost. Most families have round or square granaries like huge covered baskets made of wide woven splints and covered by a big thatch roof, all raised off the ground out of reach of rats. The simple houses themselves were of similar materials, a ladder or half a dozen bamboo or pole rungs leading up to the big porch at one end, and close to the floor, a tiny window or two that can be pushed open to one side. Such a village is a thousand per cent more pleasant than a Chinese town, even when there is no public stopping-place except in the same room with slightly supercilious priests who sometimes break sound sleep with their devotions. There is an incredible amount of bathing and great quiet compared to densely packed Chinese existence. Such a village is like a country home in its atmosphere, while those of China resemble tenement-living on the worst of East Sides."

23: Franck--348-349 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 346, 361

"Formerly Vientiane had a hundred and twenty magnificent temples, so well built that, in addition to many ruins lost in the bush, some still remain symmetrical and perfect in general form, though their beams have rotted away and the masonry has been exposed to tropical sun and rain for a century. There are some striking doors giving entrance to roofless ruins; within the falling shell of a temple near the Résidence, in which I was lord of all I surveyed because of the absence of the résuper,' two big Buddhas sit in the infinitely [349] patient attitude of the East, though the rains fall and the sun beats down upon their coiled-serpent covered heads, while the vegetation piously strives to clothe and hold them together as the mud and stone of which they are made crumble bit by bit away."

25: Brodrick--90 [2] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 162, 361, 175.63

"Only ten Europeans lived in Houaphan.

Xieng-Khouang, about three thousand six hundred feet up, lies, all the same, in a valley surrounded with high hills. There is a new European quarter, by no means exclusively inhabited by Europeans, and the pagodas are among the most archaically planned of all the Laos land. (2)

2. Tran-ninh was for long ruled by independent chieftains until the province was annexed in 1830 by the King of Vientiane who, six years later, had to cede the territory to the Annamese Emperor. It was the French who added the province to the realm of Luang-Prabang."

25: Brodrick--91 [2] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 142, 162, 291, 361

"The Laotians who, in their land, keep to the river valleys and avoid the hills and plateaux, are fairly easy to recognize, since there is no confusing them with the strangely garbed men and women of the northern hills or with the semi-savage 'Khas' of the mountains. The Laotians are, as a rule, of more sturdy build than any Annamese, and compared with the stolid and serious-looking Cambodians, the men of the Laos are gay and smiling, Their dress is quite unlike that of the Cambodians. Only the saffron-clad monks will be familiar if you come up from the south. The girls, especially, love bright colours. The usual costume is a skirt reaching to the ankles and often, if not generally, of light tint, puce, mauve, yellow or red. At the waist and the hem is a band of polychrome embroidery, green and white, purple and yellow or green, red and yellow. The women wear usually a white shift, sleeveless and cut rather low back and front, but all are girt about with a long, generally, yellow scarf, draped either as a bandolier with a long end hanging down one side or slung as a gigantic necklace like an Hawaian garland."

25: Brodrick--108-109 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 361, 485

"Vientiane strings along the left bank of the Mekong and it faces almost due south over the expanse of eastern Siam's great bulge. Vientiane is quite a large place and has grown from 1900, when it was refounded, into a town of over 10,000 inhabitants, with a Government-owned bungalow and two rather modest hotels. In the Upper Laos, as a rule, there are no hotels at all, you either camp [109] out or put up in a sala where you can get eggs, chickens, rice and fuel very cheap. In the olden days, at least, before the last war, you could get by in the Laos very comfortably for ten shillings a day."

25: Brodrick--110 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 311, 361

"The Laotians have pushed down the Mekong valley and up the shores of some of its tributaries. But even in the Mekong Valley the population is sparse. Thakhek, Savannakhet and Paksé are just over-grown villages strung along a stream whose navigation becomes increasingly difficult, until at Khong and the Cambodian frontier the cataracts bar all passage, since the range of the Dangrek Hills, which borders northern Cambodia as a line of cliffs, offers a wall over which the great river's waters pour and seethe...

Laotian settlements, it is true, stretch down as far as Stung-Treng right into Cambodia, where the thin forest is always the same, though bursting here and there into richer vegetation. But the Laotians keep close to the main stream, and Cambodian influence does not cease to grow at the expense of Laotian among the 'savage' peoples off the Mekong's highway."

28: Crawfurd--215-216 G-3 (1821) 1830 Laotians - 1-2
116, 162, 361, 631

"The country of the Lao, a people speaking a dialect of the Siamese language, appears to be divided between the Siamese, the Chinese, and the Burmans. It is composed of petty states, tributary to those three powers. Four of these are under the dominion of Siam; namely, Changmai, Lan-chang, Pasak, and Luang-phra-bang. Their chiefs are hereditary princes. The first of those named places, has sometimes been written Zimai and Jang-mai, and is evidently the district which the authors of the Modern Universal His- [216] tory have converted into a kingdom, under the name of Jangoma. The town is situated upon the Menam, where it is so shallow as only to be navigable for small canoes. The distance from Bangkok to it was described to me as a month's journey, chiefly by water. Lan-chang, always considered the capital of Lao, is situated in about 15° 45' North latitude, on the great river of Kamboja, which is here as broad and as large as the Menam at Bangkok. It was described to me as being as populous as this last place; of which I have great doubt, because it has comparatively little foreign trade, is not much resorted to by Chinese, and is not the seat of a court. Among its inhabitants are said to be about eight thousand Chinese of the neighbouring province of Yunan, commonly known to the Siamese by the names of Ho and Nung-seh. Besides the four towns, with their provinces, above stated, a fifth considerable place was mentioned to me by a native of the country, under the name of Siang-kwang, situated about fifteen days' journey to the north-east of Lang-chang. An alphabet, and other specimens

of the language of the inhabitants of this portion of Lao, was shown to me at Bangkok. It appeared to be rude, and did not, as usual, follow the classification of the Nagri. The Siamese reckon, in all their portion of Lao, one hundred and one towns, large and small."

36: Gourou--23 (no date) 1947 Laotians
116, 311, 361, 376, 503

"Problems of the Mekong and of Laos.

Above Kratié the mighty River Mekong is of very little use. True, it is easy to imagine a marvellous control program, a sort of grandiose Laotian T.V.A. Dams would divide the river into level reaches; locks would allow ships of large tonnage to sail as far as Luang Prabang; the dams would make possible a huge electricity production, and the irrigation of vast tracts. Rice, cotton, maize, would fill the holds of river vessels that would ply to the sea without transhipping their cargos. Pacific and profitable co-operation would be established between Indochina and Siam.... All of which are daydreams. Capital is lacking and, above all, manpower. Such works would be possible only if the lands drained by the Mekong were populous. But Laos should nevertheless not be neglected. It should draw great profit from a modernization of forest exploitation, and from the application of the measures we have outlined above. Nothing valuable, however, will be effected in Laos unless, at first, small, selected areas are developed. It is difficult to help sparse, shifting populations, who escape both health measures and education. Whereas, if the Laotians scientifically colonize their own territory, beginning with integral development of favored areas with health control, they will then be setting up centers of demographic expansion and of economic activity from which the development of the less favored regions can proceed. Only then can the Mekong's domestication be begun."

66: Dobby--299 [4] N-5 (no date) 1950 Laotians
116, 133, 361

"The settlements of Laos are generally along the Mekong itself, with Vientiane, Luang, Prabang, Pakse, Savannakhet and Tha Khek as the largest. The river is the chief line of transport, especially between Savannakhet and Vientiane, but contact with the exterior by way of the Mekong is impeded by rapids, narrows and shifting sandbanks, the signs of an immature river."

68: Mouhot--90-91 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians-1-2
116, 162, 164, 342, 361

"At Khao-Khoc, [HD: north of Saraburi in Siam]although the second king often visits it, there is no landing-place, nor even steps cut in the steep banks to aid the ascent.

Immediately after landing I set off to look for a lodging, having been informed that I should find numerous vacant houses belonging to mandarins, amongst which I might make my choice. My men and I hunted amid the brushwood, often sinking up to our knees in mud, but could discover only seven or eight Laotian huts, the inhabitants of which form the nucleus of the population of this future stronghold, now peaceful and hospitable agriculturists, who would be deeply afflicted, and still more terrified, if ever their echoes should repeat the roar of cannon and varied sounds of war. As for the royal habitations, I could not reach them, for the whole ground, excepting a strip about fifty feet broad next the river, is a swamp; and the narrow paths are obstructed by bushes and tall grass, which had had time to grow during the six or eight months that have elapsed since the King has visited the place.

Not being able to find a lodging, some men from the village joined us, and we all set to work to cut down bamboos, with which to construct one, which was soon accomplished; and in this hut, open to every wind, we took up our abode.

I was told that a white elephant had just been taken in Laos, and had been sent off to Bangkok under the care of a mandarin. [91]

All the inhabitants of the village, amounting perhaps to about fifty, have brought their children to me, begging for remedies; some for fevers, others for dysentery or

rheumatism. I have not heard of any cases of leprosy here, as at Khao-Tchioulaü, but the children are repulsively dirty; they are covered with a coating of filth, which makes them resemble little negroes, and the greater number of them are shaking with fever."

68: Mouhot--135-136 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 361, 489, 133

"On the 24th of June [HD: 1861] I arrived at Paklaïe, lat. 19° 16´58", the first small town on my northward route. It is situated on the Mekon, and is a charming place; the inhabitants seem well off; the houses elegant and spacious,--larger, indeed, than I have seen before in this country; and everything betokens a degree of prosperity which I have also remarked wherever I have stopped since. The Mekon at this place is much larger than the Menam at Bangkok, and forces its way between the lofty mountains with a noise resembling the roaring of the sea and the impetuosity of a torrent, seeming scarcely able to keep within its bed. There are many rapids between Paklaïe and Louang Prabang, which is ten or fifteen days' painful travelling.

I was tired of my long journey on elephants, and was [136] anxious to hire a boat here, but the chief and some of the inhabitants, fearing that I might meet with some accident, advised me to continue my route by land. I therefore proceeded as far as Thadua, ninety miles farther north, and during eight days passed through much the same style of country as before, changing one valley for another, and crossing mountains which became more and more elevated, and being more than ever annoyed by the leeches. We were, however, no longer compelled to sleep in the jungle, for every evening we reached some hamlet or village, where we found shelter either in a pagoda or caravanserai."

68: Mouhot--137 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 361, 162

"On the 25th of July [HD: 1861] I reached Louang Prabang, a delightful little town, covering a square mile of ground, and containing a population, not, as Mgr. Pallegoix says in his work on Siam, of 80,000, but of 7000 or 8000 only. The situation is very pleasant. The mountains which, above and below this town, enclose the Mekon, form here a kind of circular valley or amphitheatre, nine miles in diameter, and which, there can be no doubt, was anciently a lake. It was a charming picture, reminding one of the beautiful lakes of Como and Geneva. Were it not for the constant blaze of a tropical sun, or if the mid-day heat were tempered by a gentle breeze, the place would be a little paradise.

The town is built on both banks of the stream, though the greater number of the houses are built on the left bank. The most considerable part of the town surrounds an isolated mount, more than a hundred metres in height, at the top of which is a pagoda."

68: Mouhot--137-138 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians-1-2
~~116~~, 101, 361, 643, 651

"Were they not restrained by fear of the Siamese, and their horror of the jungles so prolific of death, this principality [HD: i.e. Luang Prabang] would soon fall into the hands of the Annamites, who now dare not advance nearer than seven days' journey off. A beautiful stream, 100 metres wide, unites [138] with the great river to the north-east of the town, and leads to some Laotian and savage villages bearing the name of Fie. These are no other than the tribes called Penoms by the Cambodians, Khu by the Siamese, and Moï by the Annamites,--all words simply signifying 'savages.'

The whole chain of mountains which extends from the north of Tonquin to the south of Cochin China, about 100 miles north of Saigon, is inhabited by this primitive people, divided into tribes speaking different dialects, but whose manners and customs are the same. All the villages in the immediate neighbourhood are tributary; those nearest to the town supply workmen for buildings erected for the king and princes, and these are heavily taxed. Others pay their tribute in rice.

Their habitations are in the thickest parts of the forests, where they only can find a path. Their cultivated grounds are to be seen on the tops and sides of the mountains; in fact, they employ the same means as wild animals to escape from their enemies, and to preserve that liberty and independence which are to them, as to all God's creatures, their supreme good.

68: Mouhot--137-138 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians-2
116, 101, 361, 643, 651

Yesterday, and the day previous, I was presented to the princes who govern this little state, and who bear the title of kings. I know not why, but they displayed for my benefit all they could devise of pomp and splendour."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

000 process of going native involved a craze for collecting animals. By the time the parakeet had bitten him several times, he was ready to offer anything for it – including a worn out Citroen car he kept at Luang Prabang – but it was all of no avail.

When we left Sour Hak's place there was no one in sight in the street. Dupont said that the officers would be eating, so why worry them? We would motor off quietly down the road, have our bathe, and then see how we felt. So, driving quite slowly and pretending to take an interest in the sights, we edged our way out of the village; past the sentries, the last house, the last Laotian girl squatting on her veranda looking into space; out into the splendid and menacing amphitheatre of the landscape; very much alone, but invulnerable with the good red burgundy awash in our stomachs.

The river was there, as Dupont promised, and we swam about in it for half an hour, while the Laotian driver sat on the log bridge holding his Sten between his knees. People always alarm you with stories of the perils, the leeches and the parasites to be picked up from bathing in these countries, but as far as could be seen, the River Song – tributary of the Mékong – looked like any river in the south of England. The water poured with a swift, black, curling surface round the boulders and under the bridge. It was cold and there were long, flat, trailing weeds just below the surface. As we went into the water great mustard stains spread from us, were thinned and borne away. The Meo dog, yelping in protest, was thrown in over and over again.

Dupont now made mention of the next part of his programme. Since things had gone so well, why not stroll over to the village of Pha-Tang, half a mile off the road, down the river, and ask permission to sleep there? In this way we should at least get a comfortable night's sleep, and then, in the morning – if, of course, we felt like it – we could re-join the convoy without more ado, and no one would be the worse.

● 361 Pha-Tang was a cluster of palms and thatched roofs under the high scrawled translucent mountain shapes. A flourish of cranes

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

deserted the village paddy fields at our approach. Dupont told the driver to wait behind as we went into the village. As a convert to the Laotian way of life he paid much attention to local etiquette; he said that we must on no account appear with arms. There were no signs of life in the village and Dupont found this disconcerting. We must keep a careful look-out, he said, for a white thread across the path, or a cross decorated with red flowers. Either would mean that the village was taboo to strangers; in the first case because of a violent death or the presence of epidemic disease and in the second because the feast of the tutelary spirit was being celebrated. It was for reasons of these periodical taboos that Laotian villages, although built as near as possible to roads, were not actually on them. The places where we had stopped that day were not true Laotian villages at all, but military posts, around which a few store-keepers, mostly Chinese, had grouped themselves.

Although Dupont could find no signs of a definite taboo, he was still very uneasy that no one had come out to greet us. The correct thing on entering a Laotian village with the intention of staying the night was to ask for the headman and obtain his permission to do so. Unless this were done it would be a grave discourtesy to enter any house. Dupont emphasized that while the Laotians were tolerant, civilized and hospitable, there were certain indispensable forms, and as we mooched about the deserted village, he poured out information on the subject; even describing the position for correct sleeping; body stretched out at right angles to wall containing door, feet pointing to the door. When I suggested that we might find an empty hut and sleep in it, he was startled. Although the villagers might overlook minor breaches of custom, he said, this would be a grave one, involving them in an expensive purification ceremony before the hut could be occupied again.

I offered no more suggestions and in the end we found a rather scared looking woman who said, when Dupont spoke to her in Laotian, that the headman was away, and was not expected back. It was quite clear now that we were not welcome, and Dupont said

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM 1 Indochina
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boy's pockets lay strewn about; the lengths of string, the broken penknives, the buttons, the mirror glass, the tins, the bottles and the burned out lamp bulbs. Here was accumulated the jackdaw harvesting, the valuable glittering rubbish which was all a Meo wanted of civilization, and which he was free to take, while leaving the civilization itself severely alone. What foolish, generous people, these town-dwellers were! M 342 181

Our host's wife, a child of fifteen, was lying with her baby on a heap of rags in the corner. The baby was sick, he said, but the only thing necessary was to keep it away from the light – and air – as much as possible. Most Meo babies die in their first two years, and one wonders what would have happened by now to the fertile land of Indo-China, if they didn't. M 758 165

There was a gun in the corner – a muzzle-loader of the kind it takes a Meo two years to make. They are copied from the guns first supplied by the Jesuits to the Chinese, but are turned out by an endlessly laborious process involving boring out a solid bar by twirling a white hot iron in it. It was enormously long, like an old-fashioned Arab stove-pipe gun, and when Dupont took notice of it the Meo offered to show it to him in use. We went outside and he loaded it with powder and shot he made himself. This process took about five minutes. Before pressing the trigger he warned us to stand well away because of the muzzle blast. The target was a small banana-leaf, skewered against a bank at twenty paces. There was a tremendous bang when he fired, but the leaf remained intact. He blamed this on the maize-spirit which we had just drunk, and was quite delighted when Dupont, giving a demonstration with his American light carbine, also missed. M 411 177

There were no dogs at all at this village. They were all down at the poppy fields with their owners, the Meo said. 000

Luang Prabang lies at the end of a long, curling descent from the mountains and through smoking bamboo groves, on the banks of the Mékong. It is built into a tongue of land formed by the con- L 361

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM 1 Indochina
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361 fluence with the river of a tributary; a small, somnolent and sanctified Manhattan Island. A main street has turnings down to the river
346 358 on each side and a pagoda at every few yards, with a glittering roof and doors and pillars carved with a close pattern of gilded and painted designs. There is an infallible sense of colour, a blending of old gold and turquoise and of many greys; but the bonzes are continually at work, painting and carving and refurbishing, so that everything is just a little too new (an extraordinary complaint in Laos), too spruce, too odorous of freshly applied varnish. The roof finials glisten with new applied glass and china mosaic. The ancient, blunted features of lions and dragons get regular scrubbings, have their teeth painted dead white and are re-fitted, as required, with new eyes of green glass. A year or two's neglect might greatly improve Luang Prabang.

000 For all the briskness with which its holy places are maintained, the silence in Luang Prabang is only disturbed by the distant, classroom sounds of bonzes chanting in Pali, and the slow, mild booming of gongs. It is the home-town of the siesta and the Ultima Thule of all French escapists in the Far East. Europeans who come here to live soon acquire a certain, recognizable manner. They develop quiet voices, and gentle, rapt expressions. This is accompanied by the determined insouciance of the New Year's reveller. It is an attitude which is looked for and is put on like a false nose or a carnival hat. Laos-ized Frenchmen are like the results of successful lobotomy operations – untroubled and mildly libidinous. They salt their conversation with Laotian phrases, all of which express a harmoniously negative outlook. *Bo pen nhang*, which is continually to be heard, means no more than, 'It doesn't matter'. But said in Laotian it takes on the emphasis of a declaration of faith. Single men instantly take to themselves Laotian wives, completing their bride's happiness with the present of a superb bicycle, covered with mascots and pennants, and with chaplets of artificial flowers round the hub-caps, instead of the leather, dust-removing strap one sees in Europe. Several painters have retired here to escape the world,

114 which he felt during his stay in Laos, despite the somber presentiments which prevented him, as he admits, "from appreciating and enjoying things as formerly."

For three years he had been a tireless explorer of the Indo-Chinese brush, a prey to the fatigues, the miseries, the privations and the dangers of the sly and evil forest. A poor traveler, as he himself ingrenuously relates, he had sacrificed his family, his comfort and his health (and perhaps his life) "to the sole end of being useful to his fellow men, of discovering an unknown insect, plant or animal /220/ or verifying a latitude point in a remote region."

133 361 ● Leaving Bangkok on April 12, he reached Paklay on June 24 after crossing the terrible forest of the "King of Fire" for the second time and breathing "in the midst of an atmosphere of extreme stench, hot like a steam bath filled with putrid miasmas." Paklay was a great consolation to him. "A charming village," he wrote, "very rich, larger and more beautiful than any which I have so far encountered. The houses are elegant and spacious, and everything denotes an ease and well-being which I have since noted in all the localities where I have stopped. The Mekong is much wider there than the Menam at Bangkok, and it is with a noise like that of the sea and the impetuosity of a torrent that it cuts a path between high mountains which seem to have difficulty containing it in its bed. . . . The sight of this beautiful river had the same effect on me as meeting a friend, for I have long drunk of its waters. It is an old acquaintance, and has long cradled and tormented me. Now it flows majestic, full to the brim. . . it is a truly grandiose spectacle."

Dissuaded from going up the Mekong by the inhabitants, who feared that some mischance might befall him /221/ /Page 221 is devoted to an illustration: "The Mekong at Paklay."--Translator/ in the rapids, he resumed his journey on elephant back and reached Luang-Prabang on July 25. "A delicious little city," he noted, "which stretches over a space of a square mile and holds a population, not of 80,000 inhabitants as Mgr. Pallegoix says in his work on Siam, but of only seven or eight thousand. The site is charming, and the mountains which frame the city form a circular valley in the shape of an amphitheater nine miles wide which must once have been a closed basin. The countryside is extremely pretty and reminds one of the beautiful lakes of Como and Geneva.

132 "Were it not for the sun of the tropics which shines constantly on this valley, or if a gentle breeze tempered the overpowering heat which prevails there during the day, this spot would be a little paradise.

What would he have said -- and what would not have been his delight -- if he had reached the smiling capital not in July when the tropical sun does indeed alternate its hottest rays with cataracts of the most violent downpours, but in December or January during the delicious Laotian winter which spreads the sweet coolness of Mediterranean springtime over an autumnal decor? He could scarcely have been able, in the course of his hunts for insects, to grasp /223/ a fugitive vision, between two tornadoes, of the golden minaret of the Phou-Si, the sacred hill in the heart of the city, or of the harmonious suburbs all trembling in their mantles of verdure, or of the flaming twilights on the misty mountains at whose feet winds the capricious Nam-Khane, a true river of diamonds by moonlight... 132 /361/

"The city," he explains, "is built on both banks of the river, but the greater number of dwellings are built on the left bank. The largest part surrounds an isolated peak which is a hundred and some meters high and at the summit of which a pagoda has been established." 361

On August 5 he was presented "to the princes who govern this little State and who bear the title of kings." He depicts them (Tiantha-Koumane and his brother the Oupahat Oun-Kham) with a dash of bantering irreverence, then immediately acknowledges that the king is "kind and good" to him (1). 643*

1. "He takes care of my letters. He himself will take them to Bangkok where he goes, I believe, to take his oath of allegiance and vassaldom." "I do not know why," he continues, "but they display in my behalf all that they are capable of imagining in the way of pomp and splendor." 643* /648*/

He is thus the first to note the dominant character trait of this kind, open-hearted /224/ and hospitable people. Tiantha-Koumane was certainly ignorant of his guest's capacities and had no opinion on the naturalist Mouhot, who was still quite unknown in Europe. It was therefore not the scholar whom he intended to honor, but simply the stranger and the traveler whose visit was a happy event for the kingdom, an event which should be celebrated with great pomp and with general rejoicing. All the Frenchmen from Pavie down to our own day who have explored the principality have been given a welcome which has always been just as spontaneous and have been received with the same eager and smiling good grace. 609 157 643*

glades, but "instead of the oil trees, bogus teaks with their whitish foliage and their trunks deeply dented with wide grooves, we find gigantic, shade-giving pines; and instead of the bare, powdery or viscous soil, a fine level turf on which it is a pleasure to walk and where it is enjoyable to linger and slow one's pace" (2). 133 137

(2) Letter from Captain Rivière, reproduced by Captain Gosselin in Le Laos et le Protectorat français, 1900. [113]

[136] It is also a region of wild beasts, and the inhabitants of the muong of Ma-Ha-Saï come there every year to hunt elephants.

At the very source of the Sé-Bang-Faï there springs up a noteworthy peak about 1200 meters high from which many watercourses flow down to the Annam coast.

133 South of this point the Annamitic Chain drops to give way to the gap of Aï-Lao (about 410 meters in altitude) on the road from Savannakhèt to Quang-Tri. Then the chain rises to form walls which are often more than 2000 meters high in the provinces of Saravane and Attopeu. Thus, Pou-Atouat has an altitude of about 2500 meters. It is an important orographic center from which spring the Sékhong and the Poyo, which belong to the Mékong basin, and also the Song-Buong, a tributary of the Song-Caï which is a coastal river of Annam.

Between the Sédone and the Sékhong, at about the 15th parallel, stands the remarkable plateau of the Bolovens, which takes its name from the Kha tribe which inhabits it. It is a mass about 100 kilometers in diameter, and its height varies between 600 and 1200 meters. Travelers who have explored it have extolled the mildness [132] of the climate, the wealth of the vegetation, the beauty of the plains and the abundance of water, so [50] that Dr. Harmand suggested the idea that the plateau, which could easily be linked by road with the port of Tourane, might be made into the administrative center and sanatorium of our Indo-Chinese empire.

133 The part which the plateau may be called on to play in the future has been somewhat exaggerated. It would be imprudent to 241 envisage it as a wonderland, [Illustration here] an eldorado destined to a great future from the administrative, commercial and sanitary 361 point of view. Today it is a plateau with well-cultivated slopes which yield fine harvests of cardamom and rice, as well as tobacco, cotton and Chinese nettles [ortie de Chine], and is inhabited by gentle, peaceful folk who live in handsome, well kept-up villages.

487 A particularity which should be noted is that these two land routes which represent some hundred odd kilometers are the only ones which the traveler can take in order to go from Hanoi to Saigon by way of Luang- [Illustration here] Prabang, that is to say by way of the Red River, the Black River, the tributaries of the Mékong and the great river itself, or in order to cover a total distance of approximately 3200 kilometers. These hundred kilometers of land roads are the only ones which merit the name, since all the rest of the journey is made on navigable waterways in steamships, pirogues and rafts.

505 133 The Nam-Suong and its tributary the Nam-Seng can be negotiated in all seasons by pirogues and rafts. Ban-Pak-Seng, at the junction of the Nam-Suong and the Nam-Seng, is the capital of one of the most prosperous cantons in the province of Luang-Prabang.

A day's journey away from Luang-Prabang the Nam-Suong is blocked by [82] a shelf called the Keng-Luang which necessitates complete portage of merchandise and even of pirogues and rafts at certain seasons.

The Nam-Khan is navigable for pirogues and rafts during the greater part of the year, starting at Muong-You which is the ford for the road from Tran-Ninh to Luang-Prabang. It flows into the Mékong in the northern part of this city, one of the suburbs of which it circles.

[361] Luang-Prabang, the capital of the kingdom of the same name, is situated at an altitude of 350 meters above sea level, at 19° 54' 20" N. latitude and 99° 45' E. longitude. From the commercial point of view it is one of the most important centers--if not the most important--in Laos. The city numbers about 10,000 inhabitants and 2000 houses. In Luang-Prabang the river is 350 to 400 meters wide. Just above and below the city it is blocked by sandbanks which leave a channel only 100 meters wide during the low water period, but which is always navigable for pirogues and rafts.

The following table shows the average length of time it takes to travel both up and down the rivers between Luang-Prabang and the posts on this reach.

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About fifteen kilometers from Luang-Prabang a series of rapids begins which makes navigation as far as Pak-Lay extremely difficult, even in pirogues. The Keng-Kaniok and the Keng-Louang [83] make it necessary to unload merchandise and transport it by land using bearers, while the pirogues pass the rapids empty.

Between Luang-Prabang and Pak-Lay the river is quite deeply cut into hills and rock masses, the sides of which constrict its bed to a width of only fifty meters at several points during the low water period. But as it approaches Pak-Lay (1) it widens out to 700

(1) Pak-Lay is situated at 18° 12' 20" N. latitude and 99° 5' E. longitude.

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or 800 meters.

In this part of the river we should note three tributaries of some importance on its right bank. These are the Nam-Houng, the Nam-Poun and the Nam-Lay, and in their valleys there are many teak trees.

Towards the 18th parallel between Pak-Lay and Xieng-Khan (2)

(2) It is at Ban Houé-Hat, between Pak-Lay and Xieng-Khan, that the Mékong comes closest to Bangkok (470 kilometers as the crow flies).

the Mékong is constricted between rocky headlands. Here it is extremely sinuous, and describes an overall northward bend slightly below the parallel (3). Then in another bend which is broader

(3) There is no tributary worthy of note on the left bank. On the right bank, however, about in the center of the bend and upstream from Xieng-Khan there are the mouths of two water-courses, the Nam-Huong and the Nam-Leui, which water a region of fairly dense population. One particularity to be noted is as follows: the sources of these two rivers are only a few kilometers away and are separated, by rather low ridges, 1) from the Nam-Lom-Sak, the easternmost branch of the Ménam, and 2) from the Klong-Koé-Noï, one of its middle left-bank tributaries.

and less winding, but which turns in the opposite direction, that is

133 505 to say towards the north, the river is joined on its left bank by the Nam-Sang and the Nam-Thon, the valleys of which are rich in gold and catechu (sisièt). Then it finally leaves its steep gorges and reaches Sam-Pan-Na, the entrance to the great middle reach which extends as far as Savannakhèt.

Although it presents numerous navigation difficulties because of its rapids, native boats are nevertheless very active as far as Luang-Prabang by reason of the large flow of trade from this great market towards Bangkok by way of Pak-Lay on the one hand, and by way of Nong-Khay on the other.

[84] 2. The Middle Reach

133 505 At Sam-Pan-Na the Mékong leaves the region bristling with mountains which have restricted its course for good and all, and spreads out at its ease in a fine navigable reach nearly 600 kilometers long.

361 It first passes through Vien-Tiane, the old capital of the kingdom of the same name which included, before 1827, all the Laotian territory on both banks of the Mékong between Luang-Prabang and Cambodia. Today the former state of things has been reestablished, and Vien-Tiane is once again the capital of French Laos. In fact, this point is the navigation terminus of the steam launches of the Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet Company [compagnie des Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine], even though the river is accessible to steamships as far as Kok-Peung, which is about 35 kilometers from Vien-Tiane, that is to say above Sam-Pan-Na. It would be true to add that the company would derive no commercial advantage from sending its launches that far up.

Between Vien-Tiane and Nong-Khay the river describes a sharp southward bend which doubles the 22-kilometer distance between the two points by land.

"Nong-Khay, which was founded after the destruction of Vien-Tiane by the Siamese, has partly inherited the importance of this old city. It is the greatest population center to be found on the banks of the Mékong between Pnom-Penh and Luang-Prabang" (1).

(1) Francis Garnier, op. cit. [Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine, 1885.]

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[492]

Today Nong-Khay numbers about 10,000 inhabitants and 2000 houses. It is the starting point for the ox-cart caravans which travel to Bangkok by way of Korat carrying all the products of northern Laos.

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From Nong-Khay on the Mékong winds through a plain in a northeast direction. Its banks are densely populated and highly fertile. At Pon-Pissay, on the 18th parallel (2), the river makes

(2) The reader will have noted that the 18th parallel has often been referred to in the foregoing. This stems from the curious fact that, in its meanderings, the great river is theoretically cut seven times by the parallel between Pak-Lay and Saniabouri, that is to say over a distance of 535 kilometers.

another northward bend [85] as far as Keng-Sa-Doc, which is just downstream from Pak-Sane (Patchoum). From this point on the Mékong takes the course which it will keep all the way to the sea, following a line approximately parallel to the Annamitic Chain and to the Gulf of Tonkin.

Somewhat beyond Pon-Pissay the Mékong is joined on its left bank by an important tributary, the Ngûm, a fine river with a peaceful course whose valley is highly populated and gives rise to quite extensive trade. Cinnamon, tobacco and catechu [sisiêt] are its chief products. The Ngûm can be navigated by pirogues and rafts in all seasons as far as Tinh-Kéo, where the river is joined by the Nam-Song, about thirty kilometers from Tourakhom. The gunboat Massie went partway up the river during the high water period. It is said that the Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet Company [compagnie des Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine] intends to begin a steam launch service along the river because of its commercial importance.

After the Ngûm on the left bank of the river come first the Nam-Mang, which is of no great interest, and then the Nam-Nhiêp, which might be thought larger than it really is, to judge by its mouth. In fact, its total length is scarcely fifty kilometers, and its valley is sparsely populated. Just downstream from the Nam-Nhiêp is the mouth of the Nam-Sane, which flows into the river at Muong-Pak-Sane (Patchoum). This river, which has a very winding course, can be navigated by pirogues and rafts in all seasons as far as Keng-Louang, to the north of Borikan. It can be navigated by steam launches over a distance of about fifty kilometers during the high water period.

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or as far as Muong-Borikan which is about halfway between the Mékong and the Keng-Louang. At Pak-Sane a road comes from the right bank and leads to Tran-Ninh by way of Borikan.

Downstream from Pak-Sane there is a series of small rapids which can be negotiated in all seasons. One of these is the Keng-Sa-Doc. Below this point the Mékong is joined by an important left-bank tributary, the Nam-Ka-Dinh or Nam-Teûn. Captain Gosselin describes the latter as follows (1):

(1) Captain Gosselin, op. cit. [Le Laos et le Protectorat français, 1900.]

[86] "The Nam-Ka-Dinh, or Nam-Teûn, has its origin in the center of the muong of Cam-Mon, on a very high and irregular plateau containing the watershed between the basins of the Mékong and of the China Sea. This torrential river, which cuts the plateau of Na-Kaï and receives all its waters, is unusual in that it has navigable tributaries while it itself is not accessible to navigation over the greater part of its course.

"This peculiarity can easily be understood from a glance at the map, where one may note the enormous difference in altitude which its course shows over a distance less than sixty kilometers, immediately downstream from the point where its tributary joins it."

It is possible to travel up the Nam-Ka-Dinh for a two days' journey, as far as the rapids of Keng-Bi.

Throughout this whole reach, as far as Ban Ta-Sa-Kou (right bank) and Hueûn-Hin (left bank), the Mékong retains the appearance of a peaceful river flowing between low banks which are now sandy, and now covered with abundant vegetation. Its width varies between 1200 and 1500 meters, and its waters are deep enough to make steam navigation possible almost all year long. However, the first rapids or Keng-Kassek, which are situated just above Saniabouri, are an obligatory transshipment point during the dry season, although this obstacle does not exist in the period of high waters. After Saniabouri the river passes between Outhène, a quite important market on the right bank, and Pak-Hin-Boun, the capital of a province on the left bank (Cammon).

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The Nam-Hin-Boun, a left-bank tributary, comes from the plateau of Na-Kaï. This river is unusual in that it flows into a tunnel

under the rocks, where it loses itself in an immense grotto. It can be navigated by pirogues in all seasons from Keng-Kièt on. 505 133

The large island of Don-Don is found between Pak-Hin-Boun and Lakhône.

Lakhone is an important center on the right bank located opposite Tha-Khèk, which is the nearest point to the Annam coast on the whole Mékong (1). [361]

(1) From Tha-Khèk to the mouth of the Cua-Nhuong (Hatinh) is reckoned 180 kilometers as the crow flies.

Just below the 17th parallel is found Muong-Panom, the holy city [87] [Illustration] [88] [Blank page] [89] of Laos and a celebrated spot of pilgrimage, by reason a That (1) which is said to contain relics [778]

(1) A that is a kind of stele or four-sided pyramid.

of Buddha. Opposite Panom, on the left bank, the Sé-Bang-Fai flows into the Mékong.

The Sé-Bang-Fai comes from the Annamitic Chain. It has a sinuous and extremely long course, but cannot be navigated in any season except by pirogues as far as Pou-Houa, that is to say for a distance of about eighty kilometers.

Below its mouth, and thirty kilometers upstream from Savannakhèt, is the Keng-Kabao. The latter deserves mention here, for during the low water period it forms an insurmountable obstacle for steam launches, which never go below this point from November to July.

Difficulties in navigation do not begin until after Hueûn-Hin, and the steam launches of the River Merchant Fleet Company [compagnie des Messageries fluviales] could reach that point during the high water period if there were any commercial advantage to be gained by so doing.

A series of rapids stretches over a length of about 160 kilometers between Hueûn-Hin and Pak-Moun. These are known as the "rapids of Kemmarat" because of the large muong (2) on the right bank which

(2) Muong = province; also means capital of a province. [631]

is located along this part of the river. They are a succession of rapids

3. The Inner Reach

505 133 361 438

After being joined by the Moun, the largest tributary on its right bank, the Mékong turns back eastward. As it leaves the narrow gorge of Pak-Moun where its course narrows to as little as 200 meters in width between sheer cliffs, it resumes a general north-northwest and south-southeast direction and spreads out over rich plains as far as the mouth of the Sédone.

Korat (1), the largest market in Siamese Laos, also belongs to the

(1) The Moun passes about 25 kilometers to the southeast of Korat.

Mékong basin through the Ta-Krong. The importance of this center is well-known, and today it is directly connected with Bangkok by a railway. Oubône (2), the other market town which is the storehouse

(2) Korat and Oubône are the seats of two French consulates.

of Lower Laos for Korat and Bangkok, as Nong-Khay is the storehouse of Upper Laos, is situated on the banks of the Moun about 300 kilometers from Korat, and only sixty from the Mékong. Communication between Korat and Oubône is achieved mainly by land, by means of ox-carts. We have seen in the foregoing that [93] steam navigation had been attempted on the Moun during the high water period as early as 1891, and that the Siamese were then planning to send their steamships out on the Mékong in the hope of getting there ahead of us. The launches provide a highly irregular service between Oubône and Tha-Phan-Sang, which is about 25 kilometers downstream from Korat. The trip takes from eight to ten days going upriver, and four to five coming down.

[492]

In its lower course, that is to say between Oubône and Pak-Moun, the Moun is barred near its mouth by shelves which make navigation extremely difficult, even for pirogues, during part of the year. The Chinese merchants of Oubône, however, who go by pirogue to Bassac or out on the Sédone, go up and down the Moun in all seasons. Because of the particular service for which they are used, their pirogues are known by the special name of Hua-Moun, or pirogues of the Moun (1)

(1) See table, Chapter VIII.

of the Moun (1). 000

(1) See table, Chapter VIII.

The most difficult rapid to negotiate is the Keng-Tanah, situated only three kilometers from Pak-Moun. During the low water period it is necessary to unload them completely and transport them by hand across dry land over extremely rough sandstone rocks. It has been negotiated during the high water period by the single-wheeler the Haiphong, and since the current beyond the rapids is weak and the width sufficient (300 meters), steam navigation is possible as far as Oubône for perhaps two or three months. 505 133

Francis Garnier describes this region as follows (2):

(2) Francis Garnier, op. cit. [Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine, 1885.]

"From Pi-Moun on the river is once more unobstructed. A very weak current, straight banks and a uniform width give it, in certain spots, the appearance of a canal dug by man."

At Pak-Sédone the Mékong is joined on its left bank by another important tributary, the Sédone. This river, which is about 200 kilometers in length, rounds the northern part of the plateau of the Bolovens. All the roads which descend from this mountain mass end in its valley, and all the products of the region leave it by way of the Sédone. Cardamom, which is the most important of these, is [94] an item much dealt in at the temporary market of Champi. The latter is the terminus of the convoys which come down from the plateau, and from this point on merchandise goes by river to Bassac or Oubône. 438 361 241

The market of Champi had to be established fairly near the mouth of the Sédone, for just upriver and less than thirty kilometers from Pak-Sédone the river is barred by insurmountable waterfalls [Illustration here] fifteen meters in height. From the point of view of navigation the Sédone is therefore divided into two sections: the part situated above the falls and the part situated below. 505 133

To the north of the falls the Sédone has a reach some thirty kilometers in length which can be navigated in all seasons by pirogues

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in an almost exactly north and south direction through rich and extremely fertile plains where villages succeed one another almost without interruption. Halfway between Bassac and Khong there is another large island, called Don-Saï, which like Don-Dèng is highly populated and well-cultivated. Upstream from the island of Khong the river becomes much wider (eight to ten kilometers) and contains an important [96] group of islands which, by reason of their number, are known as Si-Pan-Don (4000 islands). The island of Khong is by far the most important. It is twenty kilometers long, seven wide, contains several fine villages and has a total population of 10,000 (1).

[361]

(1) In all Laos, this is the point where the population density is greatest with respect to the area (1500 inhabitants per 100 square kilometers).

[16]

On this island is located the city of Khong, the former capital of Lower Laos. [Illustration here]

[361]

Slightly below the 14th parallel is found the island of Khône, famed for its waterfalls which form an absolute obstacle to navigation. Francis Garnier has given us a detailed description of the falls, which he calls cataracts. A few lines of his description are given below (2):

(2) Francis Garnier, op. cit. [Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine, 1885.]

"The two largest channels and the most beautiful cataracts are found on the outermost arms of the river, the Salaphe branch and the Paphèng branch. There one may see waterfalls more than fifteen meters in vertical height and which [97] sometimes reach a width of one kilometer. The broken line of cataracts has a total extent of twelve or thirteen kilometers. Upstream the river narrows momentarily until it occupies not more than half this extent, then it spreads out again over the immense plateau of rocks which precedes the falls, losing itself in the midst of numberless islands and embracing between its two banks a space of nearly five leagues."

We have already seen that a railway was established from north to south across the island of Khône to serve as a link between the reaches of Kratié and Bassac. [Illustration here]

The reach of Bassac can be navigated by steam launches during

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Fig. 26 /p. 96/ Bank of the island of Khong, at low water (1895).

4. The Maritime Reach

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133 Below Khône the Mékong is encumbered by islands, islets and shelves which are more or less difficult to negotiate. During the high water period the river covers most of these hazards. Only the crests of the trees are left above water, and one navigates in a veritable submerged forest which reminds one of an inundation.

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438 Stung-Treng is an important center, especially by reason of its site, for the city is located at the junction of the Mékong and the Sé-Khong, somewhat below the point where the latter joins the Sésane, which is itself swelled near its mouth by the Ton-Lé-Srépok. The produce of the region of Attopeu naturally finds its way to Stung-Treng, for it is the commercial intermediary between this region and Cambodia.

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133 At Thboung-Kla, thirty kilometers below Stung-Treng, the Mékong enters Cambodian territory. Then begins a long series of rapids which impede its course and make it difficult [99] [Illustration] [100] [Blank page] [101] to negotiate, but which do not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for steam launches which have sufficient speed. The first important post in Cambodia is at Kratié, and steamships can go up as far as this point in all seasons.

The Sékhong, the Sésane and the Srépok form a basin which is noteworthy for its extent, being equal in area to all of Cochinchina. Unfortunately, the population density and importance of trade in the basin are not in proportion to so considerable an area. The valleys are sparsely populated and traffic there is, in consequence, quite limited. Finally, these watercourses are difficult to negotiate.

The Sékhong is a river whose course stretches over about 400 kilometers. Its sources lie near the 16th parallel, some hundred kilometers to the southwest of Hué, in the orographic nucleus of the Annamitic Chain which also gives rise to one of its large tributaries, the Dak-Poyo.

The upper course of the Sékhong bears the name of Dak-Mout. This river crosses an extremely rough region where towering rocks hem in its torrential bed. Beyond Koum-Kang the valley of the Sékhong widens out and small pirogues can navigate there.

At Muong-Mai, that is to say somewhat below the 15th parallel, the Sékhong is joined by the Sé-Kémane, an important tributary which, under the name of the Dak-Poyo, has its origin in the same mountain mass as the Dak-Mout. After it, like the Sékhong, flows past steep

4. HYGIENE

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The choice of dwelling sites is of prime importance from the point of view of hygiene. Insofar as necessities permit, Europeans in Laos should seek to satisfy the following conditions:

1. Avoid building in regions which are low, hemmed in, formed of damp alluvia or near swamps or stagnant ponds.

2. Also avoid living on the banks of small watercourses and choose instead, insofar as possible, the larger rivers, especially near the point where they join a sea-going river or on the banks of the sea-going river itself (2).

(2) We have seen in Chapter II that the Mekong is the only river in Laos which flows into the sea.

3. Build houses on an eminence, no matter how small, and preferably on a rock foundation or on sand or on alluvia which are sandy and permeable to water.

4. Houses may be of brick or quarry-stone. They may be roofed [116] with tiles, wooden shingles, bamboo lath or ordinary thatch, depending on the local resources. They must be raised above the ground (at least 1.5 meters), and air must be able to circulate underneath.

5. However, a house made of wood or of a double thickness of bamboo lath can be as healthy as a brick house if it is carefully built.

6. Houses should be large, well ventilated and surrounded by [Illustration here] broad verandas provided with awnings made of strips of rattan. There should at least be verandas on the south and west.

7. Floors must be such that they can be washed with running water, while mats and rugs must be kept to a strict minimum and be easy to move. The best procedure is to use a colored plaster or an encaustic and apply it to the floor of the rooms and verandas and to the bottoms of walls and partitions half a meter up from the floor.

8. Furniture must be light and easy to move, clean and even wash. Bent wood, in the Thonet style, and rattan fulfill these two conditions perfectly.

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/117/ 9. Avoid hangings and draperies insofar as possible. Have only folding doors and windows with two interchangeable sets of panels for each (glass for winter and shutters for the hot season).

[114] of what has been observed, and because no better expression of the facts could be hoped for.

THE THAI RACE

142 144 "Laotians. Of all the Thais, the Laotian is the one who has remained the purest, although he has a much higher proportion of Aryan blood than the other varieties, with the exception of the Lus. Fairly tall in stature, his hair cut short, elegant in his movements and more refined than all the other inhabitants of the land, he is the aristocratic type of Laos. His upbringing, his education, his religion and even his vices have a mark of distinction which make 438 them stand out above those of his neighbors. An excellent boatman, and a trader rather than a farmer, he is the one who seems the master 505 of the land, as much by virtue of his commercial aptitudes as by the 484 ease with which he ranges the country. Mounted on his long and narrow shaped pirogue, made in one piece of a tree trunk hollowed out by fire, he goes great distances to visit peoples of the most varied races [175] [Illustration] [176] [Blank page] [177] and serves as a link between all the human varieties which populate Laos. He is at home and at his ease everywhere, standing out clearly above all his countrymen in this respect.

[361] "The Laotian prefers to settle along navigable watercourses and in proximity to plains of ricefields. He is glad to have his land [241] worked by mercenaries or by dependents of inferior race, and some- [567] times by slaves (at least before our arrival). He himself, with quite an extensive knowledge of the needs and resources of the other inhabitants of the land, particularly likes to traffic in all kinds of merchandise. He it is who goes to buy forest products and cereal grains on the spot from the mountainfolk or from sedentary farmers, and sells them cloth, salt, tobacco, earthenware, farming implement [439] etc. in exchange. He it is who exports the products of Laos to neighboring countries and brings back the things which Laotian industry cannot produce. His business as a commercial traveler, which he likes and which gives him a good standard of living, occupies him for only a few months of the year but brings him into contact with all the neighboring peoples and also with the Europeans and Chinese in the Siamese, Annamite and Cochinchinese trading posts. Thence arises his veneer of civilization which strikes one at first glance.

181 bread by their work, they have scarcely a care for the morrow.
461 Scrupulous observers of the traditions handed down to them by their ancestors, they live an utterly carefree life and instinctively dread everything foreign or unknown to them.

463 Occupations. The men busy themselves with the tasks of farming,
241 fishing and hunting. They are very industrious and skilled farmers, and can draw admirably on the soil's resources. They bring in the water
462 needed for irrigating their rais or mountain ricefields through ingenious canals built along the sides of hills, and they also know how to capture springs, often very distant ones, for the same purpose. To decorticate paddy, they use mills driven by artificial waterfalls. The women perform the household chores, take care of the children, make and mend clothes, harvest and spin cotton, breed silkworms, unwind the cocoons and mill the silk. Theirs also is the task of supplying the home with water and with wood which they gather in the forest, as well as sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, getting in and decorticating the rice. These many tasks leave Thai women and girls little leisure, and it would thus seem only natural that they should profit by a moment of pleasure, whenever one presents itself in the midst of their multiple duties. They do, in fact, go in for fun eagerly and behave as keenly, despite their more reserved appearance, as their Laotian sisters.

• 361 Houses. There is no difference between Laotian villages and Thai villages, except that the latter are better kept and cleaner.
342 Thai houses are generally longer and higher than those of the
592 Laotians, by reason of the custom which decrees that the whole family--parents, children and grandchildren--shall live under the same roof. Some Thai houses are as much as thirty meters long and from eight to ten meters wide. In rare cases one finds much larger houses which are from seventy to seventy-five meters long and twenty-five meters wide.

342 Thai houses very often have no verandas on their long sides, but always have two, one at each end, which are covered by rounded roofs
554 and serve as reception terraces or antichambers.

The houses of mandarins and notables can be distinguished from the others by the fact that the roof rafters and the trusses of the gables extend above the line of the roof and cross. These members are decorated with wooden silhouettes or scallops ending in discs which, depending on their number and arrangement, indicate the rank of the house's owner.

Tribal Tai

619 The Neua-Thais. The Neua-Thais differ very little, in all
361 respects, from their fellows. They generally live on higher ground than the other Thais, but they change the location of their village quite frequently. [241] [Illustration] [242] [Blank page] [243]

291 The women knot their skirts under their armpits, above their breasts, and always wear a very short jacket made of cotton, silk or velvet, depending on the season.

231 They engage in sericulture, and with the silk spin and weave brocaded cloth with harmonious colors.

779 At the same time as ancestor worship, the Neu-Thais practice an attenuated form of Buddhism. Pagodas are rare and the bonzes, few in number, serve several centers in turn.

461 Their character is docile. They do not have a very marked taste for trade and are content to be excellent farmers and livestock breeders.
276 Unfortunately, they are inclined to be opium smokers. This is doubtless due to the proximity of the Meos and Yaos who are the producers of the drug.

619 The Phou-Eunes. This branch of the Thai family is very close to
101 the Laotians in mores and customs.

There are only a few modifications in costume and language, modifications due to the age-old proximity of the Annamites and the continuous relations which have existed between the two peoples.
[438] These latter may be explained by the fact that the territory long inhabited by the Phou-Eunes in the east and southeast of Tran-Ninh is situated on the Tonkin Gulf side, and that their produce naturally flows towards the ports on the Annamite coast (1).

(1) To be sure, there are several groupings of Phou-Eunes in the Mekong basin, in Tran-Ninh, to the northeast of Vien-Tiane and in Camkeut-Cammon.

361 The Phou-Eunes prefer to live in high valleys and on high plateaus where the climate is quite severe during the winter. They are more reserved in character than the Laotians, more industrious and less inclined to celebrations and festivities of all kinds.

779 Their religion is Buddhism, but the bonzes are less numerous than elsewhere. It is probable that the little taste which Phou-Eunes have for the religious life is due to the influence of nearby Annam, where the bonzes are a long way from being venerated and coddled as they are in Laos.

291 cover their bust with a small short jacket which is very close-fitting and bright in color. It has a heart-shaped opening on the chest and, like the men's jacket, is ornamented with galloons and passementerie. For celebrations and ceremonies Lu women wear a heavy turban on their head which is folded flat or pleated, shaped like a mitre and generally made of black silk spangled with gold.

301 Both men and women pierce the lobes of their ears [246] with a broad opening, into which they introduce hollow gold or silver cylinders which are sometimes as large as three centimeters in diameter.

306 Great lovers of jewelry, the Lus number skilled jewelers and goldsmiths among them who make hair coil plaques, ear cylinders, flat braided metal belts with wide chased and checkered buckles, bracelets, rings, hilts and sheaths for daggers and swords, etc. [Illustration alongside text here]

411 The Lus almost always wear daggers and swords. Each of them, so to speak, possesses a rifle, generally flintlock, which by the shape of
243 the stock, the length of the barrel and the many bands which adorn it greatly resembles the long Moukhala so dear to our Arabs in Algeria.

[361] Lu villages are clean, and the houses are arranged in a checkerboard pattern.

[231] The Lus have a high reputation as breeders of oxen and horses.

527 A great lover of celebrations and parades, this boisterous people sets off gunpowder at every opportunity, and there is no festival, private or public, so small that it is not accompanied by salvos and fireworks.

[77] From their contact with the Burmese the men have retained a [247] [Illustration] [248] [Blank page] [249] taste for dancing and for
535 sword fights mingled with dance steps in which they manifest a real grace and elegance.

"Among other forms of amusement, the men execute, with a truly remarkable suppleness and skill, sword dances which are perfectly elegant. Naked to the waist, with their trousers rolled up and bunched and a wooden sword in each hand whose cutting edge has been dipped in dye so that the thrusts will leave a mark, the two champions confront one another. Moulinets, parries and returns follow one another without apparent effort, and the movements are undulating and rapid but without any abruptness. The men seem to be caressing one another, not fighting, and yet the slashes leave their colored traces on the skin of the vanquished. Direct thrusts are forbidden, but the entire body from head to foot is fair game for the opponent. Thus during the

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Kha

"The most varied types are to be found among the Khas. Some are just like the American 'Redskins,' others have a heavier and more bestial appearance, and still others are small and puny. Certain of them are veritable savages who have never heard of clothing and live in shapeless huts, taking to the trees or fleeing into the forest at the slightest alarm, with monkey-like habits and the instincts of wild animals.

"Others, on the other hand, wear clothing quite like that of the Lus, build proper houses and enjoy a comparative degree of civilization. But they all carry a bag of dark blue cloth which never leaves them.

"It is a long way between the primitives which some of them are and the half-civilized beings which the better policed among them are. Thus the greater part of these poor folk have long been in servitude, especially in the northern and central part, and have become the humble servants of more highly refined races which exploit them.

"In the south, however, some tribes of particular origin have been able to resist all outer authority and are still free and independent today." [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

The Khas of northern Laos. All the Khas of northern Laos have been brought under control, and even emancipated, and live grouped in villages or hamlets which are distributed over the mountainsides, generally near some watercourse.

Houses. Kha houses, which are built on piles and in the same style as those of the Laotians although in less careful fashion, are set down without any care for symmetry or alignment. They are generally much smaller and built for a single family. The houses are extremely dirty.

The Khas have very little in the way of large livestock, and so the under part of the houses shelter only pigs and poultry.

A few Kha tribes, such as the Khouenes (white and black), Khmous and Lemets, which are the most civilized have quite fine villages with well built and carefully aligned houses. A pagoda will sometimes be found in these.

Costume. Khas of both sexes wear their hair long and wound in a coil on the nape of the neck or top of the head. The [258] Lemets comb part of their hair down over their forehead and cut it off straight at the eyebrow level.

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Hill Tribes

Almost all are of low birth and are crude and illiterate. They have married Thai or Kha women and thereby founded a stock of halfbreeds. This race is destined to merge with the mass of the Laotians or Thai population and through successive crossings lose all distinctive characteristics.

The Meos. The Meos are also Yunnanese who have retained a degree of independence and have not been marked with the Chinese imprint like the Hos or adopted baggy clothes and the custom of wearing their hair only in a braid.

They are distributed in groups of a few families each of which live on the peaks of the mountains in northern Laos and the Sib-Song Chau-Thais. They can be divided into three great families--the blacks, the whites and the reds--which owe their names to the color of certain parts of the women's costume. Thus among the black and red Meos skirts or jackets are light blue in color, but the latter have a wide collar ornamented with black or red embroidery. Finally, a small turban with black and white checks or of red material, depending on the case, completes their garb. Among the white Meos, the women wear a skirt and jacket of unbleached cloth, with a white and blue embroidered collar.

The men's clothing is light blue in all cases. It is composed of a broad pair of trousers which come down somewhat below the calf, where the legs are drawn tight, and of a short, tight-sleeved jacket which buttons down one side.

A turban winds around the head and covers their long hair, which may be rolled or braided.

The women's hair is parted and wound on the upper part of the nape of the neck in a coil. (1)

(1) See Appendix XIX.

The Meos practice ancestor worship primarily, like many Asian peoples. They have no pagodas or bonzes, but elders perform the office of priests and also administer justice.

[268] The Meos bury their dead, and make animal sacrifices on the occasion of births, marriages and deaths so as to gain the favor of the "Phis" or multiple and varied genii in whose existence and influence they believe.

Marriage is as simple as among the other peoples of Laos.

Divorce may occur either through mutual consent or in the case of adultery.

Finally, the Ao-Tchaine Yaos owe their name (bearing sapeks) to the fact that the men's jacket, which is shorter than that of the other Yaos, is ornamented in front with several rows of flat copper or silver buttons which resemble sapeks (Annamite and Chinese coins).

The women fasten a pad of compact, gummed hair on their coil by means of sticks made of ivory, of bone or simply of wood.

Like the Meos, the Yaos inhabit the peaks of mountains in northern Laos where they grow poppies. They are confirmed opium smokers.

[270] [Blank page] [271] [Illustration at top]

CHAPTER V

1. ORGANIZATION

Consulate and Commercial Agencies. Before the treaty of October 3, 1893, we already had a consul at Luang-Prabang in the Mekong basin, on the right bank of the river. In 1892 the vice-consulate was closed and commercial agencies were set up at Luang-Prabang, Outhene and Bassac on the right bank, and then at Stung-Treng on the left bank. The first three agencies were directed by representatives of the French Syndicate of Laos, and the last by a clerk of Posts and Telegraphs. The commercial agents performed the functions of consular agents. Later on in 1894 and 1895 when we actually took possession of Laos, that is to say of the territory on the left bank of the Mekong, two additional agencies were established at Xieng-Khong and Xieng-Sen. [272] Then in 1895 the agencies of Pak-Lay, Xieng-Khan, Nong-Khay, Lakhone, Ban-Mouk-Dahan and Kemmarat were created on the right bank, bringing the total number to ten, for those of Stung-Treng and Luang-Prabang had been raised to the status of commissionerships.

These new agencies were directed by "commercial agents" specially appointed for the purpose. In addition to the delegates of the French Syndicate of Laos who continued to hold office, these agents included a few inspectors of the Tonkin native guard.

The duties of these officials were poorly defined, and their chief role was to assert our presence. They were mere information agents. For this reason official circles soon decided to abolish these posts, an action made possible chiefly by the establishment of two new vice-consulates in Siam, one at Oubone and one at Ban-Dua-Makeng.

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Fig. 95 /p. 379/ A street in Savannakhet.